

DANA ROHRABACHER

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December 6, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

I was angered, but not surprised, by Afghan President Hamid Karzai's harsh and unfounded criticism of the roles the United States and NATO have performed in defending his country from Taliban terrorism. In an interview today with NBC News, Karzai blamed the Western alliance for much of the insecurity and corruption in Afghanistan. Yet, the reason 68,000 American troops are still there, along with soldiers from 28 other countries, is that despite a decade of effort and half a trillion dollars in support, Karzai still cannot provide effective leadership. The structure of his government is large and expensive, but its capacity and competence is meager and untrustworthy.

Karzai's comments were almost exactly the words used by Alaeddin Boroujerdi, an Iranian official, during a Nov. 29 meeting in Tehran with the leader of the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan, Mohammad Mohaghegh. That meeting was widely reported on state-controlled Iranian media as promoting a common anti-American front. Karzai's use of the same language only a few days later cannot be mere coincidence.

In his NBC interview, Karzai said he would not sign a new security agreement with Washington until terrorist prisoners held at the U.S. detention facility at Bagram airbase were turned over to Afghan authorities. That prison was built to hold enemies captured by American forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere. These dangerous villains pose a continuing threat to American lives and must be kept in custody or they will return to the battlefield to kill again. Afghan authorities have released many such prisoners in the past. Not only has Karzai and his administration been inconsistent in their prosecution of the war effort against the Taliban, the Afghan justice system is riddled with corruption. Cases have been thrown and prisoners have been allowed to escape. Afghan courts have even ordered the release of terrorists being held by the United States. This is unacceptable.

Karzai overuses the term Afghan sovereignty given that the U.S. pays the bills for his government and military. American armed forces are an arm of another sovereign power, the United States. They have the right to determine what do with the enemies they capture, and their first duty is to act in the way that best protects American lives.

I urge you to dismiss the imprudent comments of President Karzai and to use the immense leverage the U.S. commands in Afghanistan to insure American lives and interests are fully protected. Do not turn over dangerous prisoners to the Karzai government, nor continue to fund his incompetent policies. For too long, the United States has backed the wrong horse in Kabul. His latest comments on NBC only add to the mountain of evidence against him. If America does not find new leadership in Afghanistan, leaders rooted in the country with a solid record of fighting the Taliban, all the blood and money the U.S. has spent since 2001 will have been wasted. Any post-2014 "enduring presence" will be a futile exercise that will only cost more American lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Rohrabacher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dana Rohrabacher
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs